



This guide answers questions most frequently asked by visitors to the Shawnee National Forest (NF). Additional information can be found in our brochures and other publications. All recreation users are encouraged to practice the “Leave No Trace” outdoor ethics (www.lnt.org).

Hiking and Backpacking

There are many miles of diverse hiking and backpacking trails in the Shawnee National Forest including the 160-mile River to River Trail. Take extra precautions during hunting seasons by wearing bright orange clothing. It is a good idea to carry a compass/map or GPS unit. Forest streams do not meet the safety standards for drinking water; we recommend taking drinking water with you. National forest ownership is interspersed with privately-owned lands; respect the rights of private land owners by staying on public lands. Also hikers should yield to equestrians and move off the trail to the downhill side. Talking with the rider as they pass will help prevent startling their horse.

Campgrounds

There are seven campgrounds within the Shawnee National Forest. Johnson Creek, Lake Glendale, Pounds Hollow campgrounds have longer campsites to accommodate RVs. In general, our campgrounds are open from March 1st through December 15th, although there are some exceptions (refer to the recreation site index for fees and dates of operation). Campsites are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. There is a maximum of eight campers to a site and a maximum of 14 days continuous use. Campers can then transfer to another campground if they desire further camping.

Primitive Camping

Primitive camping is allowed in the Shawnee National Forest with the exception of developed recreation areas, 80 natural areas, on lake shores, near streams or on trails. Equestrian camping is not allowed in Wilderness. Primitive camping is free and is allowed any time of year. Do not trespass on private land and do not cut down live trees, shrubs or other vegetation. Clean up all personal garbage and make sure all fires are completely out. Campers may camp up to 14 continuous days, but no permanent structures may be built.

Wilderness

There are seven designated wildernesses in the Shawnee National Forest. Together, they equal roughly 30,000 acres of non-motorized, non-mechanized recreation. These areas are managed to perpetuate natural processes and provide an undeveloped recreational experience to the visitor. Most activities are allowed here, except bicycling and the use of motor vehicles. In Garden of the Gods, Lusk Creek and Bay Creek Wildernesses, group sizes are limited to 10. As with any backcountry travel we recommend carrying water, a map and compass. Learn and practice the “Leave No Trace” outdoor ethics at www.lnt.org.

Horseback Riding

The Shawnee National Forest is popular with equestrians because it offers many large forested areas with an abundance of wildlife and natural features. There are many miles of roads and trails that provide access to several interesting and scenic sites. Equestrians are not allowed in developed recreation areas (unless posted), on hiker-only trails or the 80 designated natural areas. Natural area boundaries are marked with yellow posts. Equestrian camping is allowed at Camp Cadiz and Johnson Creek Campgrounds and several private campgrounds in the area. Equestrians are required to stay on designated trails in the Eagle Creek, Big Grand Pierre Creek, Lusk Creek and Upper Bay Creek Watersheds which are located in the central and east portion of the Shawnee NF. A trail map for this area is available for purchase at Shawnee NF offices or at the *Friends of the Shawnee* website (www.snffriends.org). Equestrians should stay on designated trails to minimize the impact to natural resources

ATV and Off-road Vehicles

Presently, there are no ATV/OHM riding opportunities on the Shawnee National Forest. The Forest Service has restrictions prohibiting motorized vehicles from traveling off Forest roads. This means there is no motorized use on trails or cross-country.

The traffic codes for the State of Illinois apply to all Forest roads open for general public motorized use. Only licensed vehicles and licensed operators are permitted on roads

Bicycles

There are no designated bike trails in the Shawnee National Forest. The Forest has restrictions prohibiting mountain bikes from traveling off-road, in natural areas and in other non-motorized areas. **However, mountain bikes are allowed on roads.** Generally, roads within the Shawnee National Forest consist of either dirt or gravel. In this area, state highways are narrow and have heavy truck use. Therefore, use extra caution when riding along these routes.

Hunting

State hunting laws are enforced on the Shawnee National Forest and require a license which can be obtained from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (www.dnr.illinois.gov). Hunting activities are prohibited in or within 150 yards of any building, campsite, developed recreation site, trail or occupied area. Shooting across roads and bodies of water is also prohibited. All firearms and bows with arrows should be cased and unloaded while in the recreation area or other public areas. Construction or use of permanent deer stands is not permitted on national forest land.

Fishing

There is a variety of fishing opportunities ranging from rivers to small ponds. All rules and regulations set by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources are followed on the Shawnee National Forest. Anglers must have their license in possession at all times while fishing. For more information on any of the lakes or ponds contact one of the Shawnee NF offices.

Rentals

The Shawnee National Forest does not provide rental cabins, canoes, bicycles or horses. However, there are private vendors locally for many of these items. For information contact the Southernmost Illinois Tourism Bureau or the chamber of commerce in the area you plan to visit.

Foraging and Gathering Natural Products

Gathering is when natural foods or materials are collected from its natural source. Gathering berries, fruit, flowers, rocks, and other natural products for personal use is allowed on national forest lands. Regulations vary depending upon what is being gathered. It is also important **not** to trespass on private land.

Personal plant collection is allowed on national forest lands except for designated wilderness and natural areas. Commercial plant collecting is restricted and requires obtaining a special permit from the Shawnee National Forest. Collection of endangered, threatened or rare species is prohibited. When gathering berries or fruits gather only the amount that will be used; wildlife depends upon such foods for sustenance. Rock collecting is limited to the amount that fits in the palm of your hand. Collecting Ginseng is not permitted on national forest lands.

Know Before You Go

- ✓ Plan ahead and prepare accordingly.
- ✓ Let someone know your travel plans.
- ✓ Be aware of hunting seasons during your visit.
- ✓ Be aware of changing weather conditions.
- ✓ Carry plenty of water or boil/treat water before drinking.
- ✓ Bugs and poison ivy are widespread, use protective spray or ointments and wash skin and clothing.
- ✓ Venomous snakes occur in southern Illinois; be cautious, watch where you step or place your hands.
- ✓ Ticks and other insects are abundant, bug repellent is recommended.
- ✓ Cell phone reception may be weak or non-existent in many parts of the Shawnee National Forest.
- ✓ Use a map & compass or gps device.
- ✓ Practice the Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics For more information visit: www.lnt.org

Access for All

Many of the developed recreation sites within the Shawnee National Forest provide accessible facilities for people with disabilities. As the Forest replaces and upgrades facilities, its features are brought in line with accessibility standards. Contact one of the Shawnee NF offices for information on the level of accessibility in the recreation areas or other accessibility programs.

Gatherings on National Forest Lands

Large groups and commercial gatherings of any size requires a special use permit. Contact the Hidden Springs Ranger District for more information or to see if your event requires a permit.

Map Information

A free brochure about the Shawnee National Forest is available at each Forest Service office. Most of our maps are viewable and downloadable on the Shawnee NF website. You can purchase detailed Shawnee National Forest map, trail maps and individual topographic maps at any of the offices. These maps will show national forest ownership, roads and other features. A map order form is available on the Shawnee NF website.

Mobile Tours

Access interesting information about Shawnee NF sites and its ecosystems via our mobile tour. The mobile tour can be accessed by using your mobile phone to scan QR codes located on our mobile tour signs or via the internet, at <http://myoncell.mobi/shawneenf>.



Shawnee National Forest

Shawnee National Forest offices are closed on federal holidays.
www.fs.usda.gov/shawnee

Shawnee National Forest Headquarters

Open M-F 8:00am to 4:30pm
50 HWY 145 South
Harrisburg, IL 62946
(800) 699-6637
(618) 253-7114

Mississippi Bluffs Ranger District

Closed Monday
Open T-F 8:00am to 3:30pm
521 N. Main St.
Jonesboro, IL 62952
(618) 833-8576

Hidden Springs Ranger District

Open M-F 8:00am to 4:30pm
602 North 1st Street
Route 45 North
Vienna, IL 62995
(618) 658-2111